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Attachment C –   Readiness Self-Assessment
*Only for New Applicants

Is My Organization Ready to Apply for an AmeriCorps Grant?

INTRODUCTION

This Readiness Assessment asks simple questions to help you determine whether your organization is poised to successfully apply for and implement an AmeriCorps grant. Read each question carefully and answer honestly. This assessment is a tool to help you plan for implementation and administration of AmeriCorps grant-funded programming.

Successful completion of the assessment does not guarantee AmeriCorps funding through the Governor's Office of Community Service (OCS) or the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS).

Once you have completed the readiness assessment, please continue with the Financial and Administrative Survey that will be used by the Governor's Office of Community Service to determine if you organization is financially ready for any AmeriCorps Grant.

Regardless of your results, The Governor's Office of Community Service is eager to assist you in designing and implementing services benefiting the residents of Montana. For more information please contact the Governor's Office of Community Service at serve@mt.gov or (406) 444-9077.

Please submit a completed readiness assessment with the letter of intent **(Attachment B)** to the Governor's Office of Community Service on October 13th, 2010 by 5pm in order to be eligible for a 2011 AmeriCorps Grant.

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FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS

Is your organization a public or private nonprofit organization - including labor organizations, faith-based and other community organizations; an institution of higher education; a government entity within the State of Montana; an Indian Tribe; or a partnership or consortia?

Yes   No   Unsure

Does your organization's plan for utilizing AmeriCorps members address specific unmet community needs in the areas of education, healthy futures, environmental stewardship, veterans, opportunity, and disaster services? *Note: Key objectives have not yet been finalized by CNCS.*

Yes   No   Unsure

**If the answer to either of the above questions is "No" then your organization would not be eligible to receive an AmeriCorps grant or serve as a Host Site for AmeriCorps members.
You are similarly ineligible if your organization is a 501 (c)(4) non-profit entity [under the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, 26 U.S.C. 501 (c)(4)] that engages in lobbying.**

Do your plans for utilizing AmeriCorps members call for members to provide service exclusively within the state of Montana?

Yes   No   Unsure

**If the answer to the above question is "No" and the other results of this Assessment are favorable, then your organization may be interested in applying directly to the Corporation for National & Community Service for an AmeriCorps*National grant BUT are ineligible to apply to the Governor's Office of Community Service.
If your organization does apply directly to the Corporation for National and Community Service you are required to submit a consultation form to the Governor's Office of Community Service. Please contact the Governor's Office of Community Service for more information.**

Administrative Competencies

Does your organization have a proven track record of establishing measurable outcomes with its programs?

Yes   No   Unsure

Does your organization have the infrastructure to recruit, train, and support the efforts of AmeriCorps members? Variables include office space, technology, supervisory time & skill, financial expertise, and the ability to manage volunteers.

Yes   No   Unsure

Has your organization previously managed a major federal, state or foundation grant?

Yes   No   Unsure

Are there formal internal controls governing all financial operations?

Yes   No   Unsure

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Does your organization have sufficient cash to operate a major grant on a reimbursement basis? Both the Federal and State governments rarely, if ever, pay grant funds in advance. Payments are made 30-60 days after submission of invoices by programs.
Yes   No   Unsure

Are the financial operations of your organization audited annually by an independent auditor?
Yes   No   Unsure

If you answered "No" to any of the above questions, it is likely your organization would struggle to successfully administer an AmeriCorps grant. Consideration should be given to seeking a partnership with an existing AmeriCorps program in Montana. Serving as an AmeriCorps host site, rather than as a primary grant applicant is often a better option for smaller organizations. Contact the Governor's Office of Community Service for more details.

ORGANIZATIONAL COMPETENCIES

The following questions address key elements of successful organizations. Completion of this portion of the assessment will help provide you with additional information about the capacity and structure in place to operate an AmeriCorps program.

Score this section of the assessment by giving yourself one (1) point for each correct answer.

ORGANIZATIONAL PURPOSE: THE MISSION

1. Does your organization have a clear written mission statement? (if no, skip to question 6)
Yes   No   Unsure

2. Do ALL organizational programs and efforts align with the mission?
Yes   No   Unsure

3. Has your organization said no to potentially good opportunities which are not consistent with the organization's mission?
Yes   No   Unsure

4. Is the mission understood by ALL stakeholders within the organization?
Yes   No   Unsure

5. Is the mission frequently referred to (e.g. in planning sessions and other meetings)?
Yes   No   Unsure

ORGANIZATIONAL GOVERNANCE & OPERATIONS

6. Does your organization have an active and independent board of directors and/or other governing body? (Independent is defined as a majority of board members who are neither employees of the organization nor family members of employees or other board members.)

Yes   No   Unsure

7. Does the organization have written policies and procedures, including a conflict of interest policy for employees and directors?

Yes   No   Unsure

ORGANIZATIONAL DIRECTION: STRATEGIC PLANNING

8. Does your organization have a clear and coherent written strategic plan for the future (i.e. 3-10 year strategic plan)? (if no, skip to question #13)

Yes   No   Unsure

9. Does the strategic plan have well defined measurable goals and achievable action steps with timeframes?

Yes   No   Unsure

10. Are the goals in the strategic plan well known and understood by the staff and board?

Yes   No   Unsure

11. Is the strategic plan made actionable by realistic and detailed annual plans that outline the specific work to be accomplished?

Yes   No   Unsure

12. Is this annual plan consistently used at all levels of the organization to guide operations?

Yes   No   Unsure

13. Does the organization conduct regular assessment of internal operations to assess efficiency and effectiveness?

Yes   No   Unsure

ORGANIZATIONAL REVENUE: SUSTAINABILITY

14. Does the organization have diversified funding from multiple sources?

Yes   No   Unsure

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ORGANIZATIONAL INFRASTUCTURE: FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

16. Are organizational and programmatic budgets closely and regularly monitored?
Yes   No   Unsure

17. Does the organization produce and review financial statements at least monthly?
Yes   No   Unsure

18. Does the organization have a development/fundraising plan in place?
Yes   No   Unsure

19. Does the organization have plans to secure the financial and in-in kind resources to meet required matches?
Yes   No   Unsure

ORGANIZATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE: TECHNOLOGY

20. Does your organization have computers?
Yes   No   Unsure

21. Does every key staff member have access to a computer with up-to-date software, internet access, and e-mail capabilities?
Yes   No   Unsure

22. Are all staff competent and comfortable using their computers?
Yes   No   Unsure

23. Does your organization have a computerized accounting system?
Yes   No   Unsure

ORGANIZATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE: HUMAN RESOURCES

24. Does your organization have a well-planned process to recruit, develop, and retain the best employees in accordance with an equal opportunity environment?
Yes   No   Unsure

25. Does your organization provide staff and volunteers with written job descriptions and the necessary resources to carry out duties appropriately?
Yes   No   Unsure

26. Does the organization provide relevant and regular training for staff and board members?
Yes   No   Unsure

27. Are employee performance appraisals conducted on a consistent and fair basis?
Yes   No   Unsure

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28. Does your organization have a well-planned process to recruit, develop, and retain volunteers?
Yes   No   Unsure

PROGRAM DESIGN: NEEDS ASSESSMENT & IMPLEMENTATION

29. Does your organization conduct regular assessments of community need?
Yes   No   Unsure
Date Last Conducted: _____

30. Does your organization analyze and use the results of needs assessments to chart change?
Yes   No   Unsure

31. Does your organization have the ability to grow and/or create new and innovative programs to meet the needs of the community?
Yes   No   Unsure

32. Are your organization's programs and services well defined?
Yes   No   Unsure

33. Does your organization have the ability to close a program that is no longer needed or relevant?
Yes   No   Unsure

ORGANIZATIONAL IMPACT: MEASURING PERFORMANCE & CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT

34. Does your organization have a comprehensive well-developed evaluation system used to measure the impact of programs and services?
Yes   No   Unsure

35. Does your organization conduct regular assessments of existing programs' effectiveness in meeting recipient needs AND identify areas for improvement?
Yes   No   Unsure

36. Does your organization collect data to measure performance and progress on a continual basis?
Yes   No   Unsure

37. Is data analyzed, used in program redesign and communicated to stakeholders on a regular basis? (e.g. annual report)
Yes   No   Unsure

ORGANIZATIONAL OUTREACH: PARTNERSHIP & COLLABORATION

38. Does your organization participate in partnerships with other groups?
Yes   No   Unsure

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39. Have these relationships led to mutually beneficial collaboration?
Yes   No   Unsure

RESULTS
Count the total number of times you selected "yes" and refer to the chart below to determine your organization's readiness. Balanced organizations with consistent excellence across organizational competencies tend to be most successful in administering complex grants like AmeriCorps. If your replies to this assessment reveal significant areas of growth, it might be best to address these before pursuing AmeriCorps support.

• **25 - 40 points:** Based on your self-assessment, your organization may have the capacity to successfully operate a government-funded project or program.

• **15 - 24 points:** Based on your self-assessment, your organization may need to a make a few improvements in your capacity and planning to independently administer an AmeriCorps grant. Exploring partnerships might be beneficial.

• **Less than 15 points:** Based on your self-assessment, your organization may have a significant need to build its capacity before it is ready to apply for an AmeriCorps grant.

FAITH BASED ORGANZIATIONS
If the conditions below are not acceptable to your organization, government funding is probably not a good option:
- Participation in government funded programs must be open to all who qualify, without regard to religious beliefs.
- No participant in a government funded program may be required to participate in inherently religious activities.
- Government funded positions must not proselytize.
- Government funded programs must be held in a separate place or time from religious activities.

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Financial and Administrative Survey

A. General Information	YES	NO
1. Has your organization received a federal grant or cost-type award in the last 2 years? If yes, what is your cognizant federal agency?_____		
• Attach a schedule showing the total federal dollars awarded to your organization, by granting agency, for the two most recently completed fiscal years.	Attach schedule	
2. Has your organization been audited by a Certified Public Accounting firm within the past two years?		
• If Yes, attach a copy of your most recent audit report.	Attach audit	
3. Are there established policies related to salary scales, fringe benefits, and travel reimbursement and personnel policies?		
4. If so, would these policies conflict with regulations regarding the AmeriCorps grant or AmeriCorps Members?		
5. Does your organization plan to use existing staff to manage the AmeriCorps program? If so, which position(s)?		

B. Financial Management	YES	NO
1. Do you have a "job cost" or "fund based" accounting system?		
2. Is your organization's accounting system a manual system?		
An automated system?		
A combination of manual and automated systems?		
3. Are entries posted to the general ledger daily?		
Weekly?		
Monthly?		
Other? Please describe:_____		
4. Does the accounting system track completely and accurately the receipt and disbursement of funds by each grant or funding source?		
5. Are common or indirect costs accumulated into cost pools for allocation to projects, contracts and grants?		
6. Does your organization have a federally approved indirect cost rate? If so, please attach.		
7. Does the accounting system provide for the recording of actual grant/contract costs according to categories of your approved budget(s), and provide for complete and current disclosure?		
8. Are time and activity distribution records maintained by funding source and project for each employee to account for total hours (100%) devoted to your organization?		

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	YES	NO
9. Is your organization familiar with federal cost principles?		
10. Is your organization familiar with procedures for the determination and allowance of costs in connection with federal grants and contracts?		
11. Does your accounting system allow for the recording of "in-kind" contributions?		
12. Does your accounting system allow for cash basis reporting?		
13. If your organization uses accrual basis accounting, are there procedures in place to allow for reconciliation between cash and accrual basis reports?		
C. Internal Controls	**YES**	**NO**
1. Are the duties of the bookkeeper/record keeper separate from cash functions (receipts, deposits, check signing/releasing)?		
2. Are checks signed by individual(s) whose duties exclude recording cash received, approving vouchers for payment and the preparation of payroll?		
3. Are purchase approval methods documented and communicated?		
4. Are all accounting entries (both cash and in-kind) supported by appropriate documentation?		
5. Are employee payroll reports supported by appropriately signed documentation (timesheets, leave slips, etc.)?		
6. Are employees who handle funds bonded against loss by reasons of fraud or dishonesty?		